



SPORTS & RECREATION

DECEMBER 10, 2009

Love of soccer connects US, Iraqi children

Staff Sgt. Jason Douglas
2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st
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FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq — Soccer is one of the most enduring and popular sports in Iraq. Iraqi children can be seen kicking the ball around at any given time of day on fields usually made of dirt.

In support of this national past time, Soldiers from a Military Transition Team in Kirkuk province began a soccer-ball drive in mid-November.

Major Tim Rustad, a Mankato, Minn., native and officer in charge of the 49th Iraqi Army Brigade MiTT, along with his Soldiers began the event to give something back to the community they drove through so often.

“We wanted to have an event where we could give back to the kids in the local area,” Maj. Rustad said. “We always gave them candy when we passed by, but they would always hold their hands in the air.”

According to Maj. Rustad, the Iraqi soldiers informed them that the reason children hold their hands up is because they want soccer balls. Using this information, the MiTT began informing friends and Family back home of their need for soccer balls, which eventually led to Maj. Rustad establishing a Facebook page for the drive.

“Our goal is basically to have people from the U.S. get involved,” he said. “I started telling them to send soccer balls to give to the children in the local area, and Nov. 10, we started the drive to get the balls.”

Major Rustad said there have been



Staff Sgt. Jason Douglas

Captain Timothy Ireland, 49th Iraqi Army Brigade Military Transition Team, shakes hands with an Iraqi child after handing him a soccer ball near Dibbis, in the Kirkuk province of Iraq, Dec. 3. Soldiers from MiTT began a soccer ball drive dubbed, “Operation Wild Balls.” The soccer balls were donated by friends, Families and others through a Web site set up by the MiTT.

more than 100 soccer balls sent with an additional 200 on the way.

By reaching out on the Internet, the MiTT team has reached a wider audience and even U.S. schoolchildren have begun sending soccer balls.

According to Maj. Rustad, an all-girls soccer team from his hometown sent 38 soccer balls.

Each soccer ball has the message, “From American kids to Iraqi kids,” written in Arabic.

“The balls come from Family, friends and people the MiTT doesn’t even know,” Maj. Rustad said. “It’s been pretty cool. We have been able to get a lot of support from back home.”

The Iraqi children receiving

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Spc. Shantelle J. Campbell

Sergeant 1st Class Juan F. Cruz, a career counselor with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Fort Riley, Kan., poses for a picture with World Wrestling Entertainment superstar, Rey Mysterio Jr. during the WWE’s visit to Forward Operating Base Paliwoda, Dec. 3.

WWE Superstars visit TF Marne Soldiers

Spc. Shantelle J. Campbell,
4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs,
1st Infantry Division
Task Force Marne

FORWARD OPERATING PALIWODA, Iraq – Six World Wrestling Entertainment superstars visited Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Paliwoda, Dec. 3.

The 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division Soldiers from Fort Riley, Kan., got to meet and take pictures with the Bella Twins, Vince McMahon, Rey Mysterio Jr., R-Truth and John Cena.

“The WWE has been sponsoring its Tribute to the Troops tour since 2003, in conjunction with Armed Forces Entertainment,” said Cena, who has been a

constant on the three-day tour since it began.

“We meet as many men and women of the armed forces as we can, and on our final day, we actually build an arena from scratch and film a WWE television show on site,” he said.

During their visit to FOB Paliwoda, the WWE wrestlers fired various weapons, ate lunch with Soldiers inside the “Black Lions” Dining Facility then headed to the unit’s conference room where they signed autographs, handed out T-shirts and posed for pictures.

“It was great to see John Cena, the twins and Vince McMahon, I’ve always wanted to see him,” said Spc. Christoffer Hagen, a Soldier with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1/28 Inf. “It was (good) ... because we don’t get this very often. It’s good to get all of the T-shirts, pictures and autographs. (Then) John Cena gave us a coin,

Golf tourney to help tots

The 2nd Beach and Terminal Operations Company at Hunter Army Airfield is sponsoring a golf tourney at Crosswinds Golf Club, Saturday with a 9 a.m. shotgun start, to raise money and toys for the area Toys for Tots program.

The cost is \$37.50 per player or \$150 per 4-man team. Also required is one new, unopened \$10 toy per player. Besides golf, fee also includes breakfast, lunch, beverages and prizes.

Registration begins at 7:30 a.m.; the lunch and awards banquet is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Questions about the event should be directed to Pete Vitiello at (912) 966-1909 or (321) 806-9206.



Special Olympics

Volunteers Needed

The Special Olympics would not exist today without the time, energy, commitment and enthusiasm of volunteers. Fort Stewart is hosting the Winter Special Olympics at Marne Lanes, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Friday. This one-day event is a great opportunity for you to give a helping hand as a hugger, score-sheet runner and, most importantly, the audience and cheering section.

To find out more about this great volunteer opportunity, contact your local ACS at 767-5058.

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The Iraqi children receiving the soccer balls were more than happy to receive them.

"We have a soccer field made of dirt, but with new soccer balls, it doesn't matter," said one Iraqi child. "Thank you to the American children."

The soccer ball delivery is done in conjunction with IA Soldiers of the 49th IA Bde., which allows them an opportunity to be seen in the communities they protect.

"Passing out the balls gives the 49th an opportunity to get out into the community and meet the people," Maj. Rustad said.

Although Maj. Rustad and his team are planning on moving to a different Iraqi province in the coming weeks, he said they plan to continue the program, and in the future, they will deliver them to children at the schools.

Staff Sgt. Jason Douglas

Major Tim Rustad, officer in charge of the 49th Iraqi Army Brigade Military Transition Team, hands a soccer ball to an Iraqi child near Dibbis, in the Kirkuk province of Iraq, Dec. 3. Soldiers from the MiTT began a soccer ball drive dubbed, "Operation Wild Balls." The soccer-balls were donated from friends, Families and others through a Web site set up by the MiTT.



3RD ID RUN/WALK TO, FROM IRAQ/AFGHANISTAN

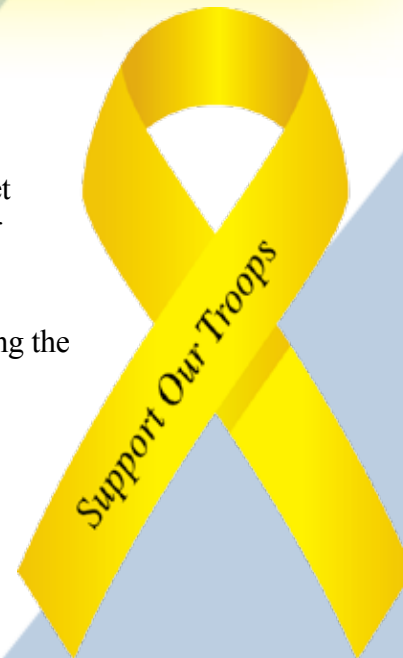
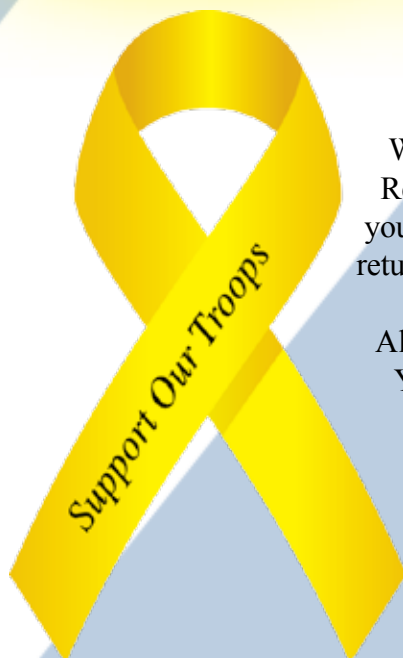
**9 A.M., JAN. 23, 2010
DONOVAN FIELD**

Walk your first mile to Iraq/Afghanistan with your Battalion Family Readiness Group Team. Log your miles to honor your Soldier and get your Battalion Team to and from Iraq/Afghanistan before your Soldier returns home.

All participants who walk or run 100 miles will receive a T-shirt during the Yellow Ribbon Walk on April 24, 2010.

Finishers will receive a certificate and coin from their Battalion Team at their unit's Last Mile Walked Ceremony.

All Soldiers, Family Members (children, spouses and parents) are encouraged to participate. Register through your Battalion Team captain or Battalion FRSA.



TIME OUT!

Sugar Ray Leonard's key to success

Jennifer Hartwig
Fort Stewart Public Affairs

"What separates a champion from a loser? Self-esteem. If you don't believe in yourself, no one else will. It's so simple, yet so very true."

The other day while I was cleaning out my closet, I came across a notebook with some pretty significant words in it. They were the words of one of sport's greatest champions, Sugar Ray Leonard. I was lucky enough to meet him two years ago – and when Sugar Ray says something to you, you listen.

Leonard talked about his greatest fights and his greatest wins, and, more importantly, how he became such a great champion.

He talked about self-esteem, confidence and hard work being the keys to success.

"On April 6, 1987, I knew something that very few other people knew – I was going to beat Marvin Hagler," Leonard said.

In 1986, Leonard came out of retirement for the second time, shocking the world by announcing that he wanted to fight middleweight champion Marvin Hagler.

"I was a huge underdog," Leonard

said. "My determination allowed me to do what had seemed impossible."

Before the 1987 fight, Leonard's inactivity and eye injuries generated much controversy, but it came to light after the fight that he had a very long training camp, including real 12-round fights without head gear.

Leonard was a 4-1 underdog, hadn't been in an official fight in three years, and Hagler hadn't lost in 11 years. But, when it was all said and done, the Brockton, Mass., native was out-boxed, and Leonard once again had the title belt around his waist.

Of course, the fight hasn't been without its controversy – to this day my mom, a Massachusetts native, believes Hagler beat Sugar Ray.

One of my favorite quotes of all time is, "Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard." I think that blends in perfectly with Leonard's message – no matter how talented you are, if you don't use that talent and let it flourish, then it won't do you any good.

Just look around professional sports. The best players are the ones who have not only the talent, but the work ethic. Who do you think is the first person to get to practice, and

the last to leave in Indianapolis? Peyton Manning. And who do you think is the first person on the floor practicing his free throws at Quicken Loans Arena in Cleveland, and the last person off the floor every day? You got it, LeBron James.

There are plenty of great athletes out there, but they aren't going to amount to much if they don't put in the work. Leonard calls it "roadwork." I call it preparation.

On Sept. 16, 1981, Leonard faced Thomas Hearns, the undefeated welterweight WBA title holder, at Caesar's Palace. Leonard wasn't the bigger or even the more talented fighter. But, he had put in the necessary work before the fight, and had the confidence to beat someone who seemed unbeatable.

"I knew I had done the roadwork; I knew I'd built up the reserve (to beat Hearns)," Leonard said.

Hearns controlled the early rounds with his jab, keeping Leonard off-balance. In the middle rounds, Leonard got inside and seriously hurt Hearns with left hooks. Hearns rebounded in rounds 8-12 and became the boxer, not the puncher. By the end of round 12, Leonard's eye, which he'd injured in a sparring

session two weeks earlier, was almost swollen shut.

"I think everyone thought, 'if he can get hurt by his sparring partner, I don't even want to think what Hearns will do to him,'" Leonard said.

But in round 13, Leonard bounced back and seriously hurt his arch-rival, and even knocked him down; Hearns barely survived the round.

In the 14th round, a combination of blows prompted the referee to stop the fight. At the time of the stoppage all three judges had Hearns ahead on points; but Leonard became the undisputed welterweight champion.

That same year Leonard was named ABC's Wide World of Sports "Athlete of the Year."

Being a great champion doesn't just come naturally; there are those who are blessed with gifts, but unless they use them, develop them and utilize them, they will be just another "wasted talent."

Just take it from Leonard:

"From one fighter to another – because we're all fighters – always be prepared; always be focused; always be determined. Do your roadwork, and for God's sake, keep those guards up."

WWE

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"It's great to have the stars come out here and support the troops."

For one wrestling fan, meeting the WWE superstars was a "dream come true."

"It was exhilarating just seeing (them)," said Sgt. Alex Auston, a Soldier with the 16th Sustainment Brigade from Bamberg, Germany. "It was just a dream come true. I can't ask for anything more. I would say my life is complete, but I've never been to an event. This is the closest I've ever been to a wrestling event; so, it was really nice that they could take time out of their busy days and come here just to spend (time) with us."

After signing autographs and posing for pictures, the WWE superstars

participated in a "Black Lion" re-enlistment and promotion ceremony.

To close the visit, the superstars along with the commander of 1/28 Inf., Lt. Col. Eric Timmerman struck the infamous "Black Lion" pose.

"This trip means the world to me," said Cena. "I have the utmost respect for the men and women who defend the freedom of (our) great nation and words can't describe it."

"I would like to thank everybody in uniform who defend the flag that I live under. Our freedoms are something that I certainly don't take for granted, and I know it's because the men and women in the armed forces that I get to enjoy being a proud American."



Spc. Shantelle J. Campbell

Soldiers of 1/28 Inf. Regt., 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. from Fort Riley, Kan., file through the unit's conference room at Forward Operating Base Paliwoda, Dec. 3 to meet and receive autographs from the six superstars of the World Wrestling Entertainment, including WWE Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer, Vince McMahon. The visit was part of a three-day WWE Tribute to the Troops tour.

For complete
information about
Stewart-Hunter
community, visit
www.stewart.army.mil